

Bodies of 4 Nagas killed by Kukis found at village near Myanmar border

Guwahati: The bullet-riddled bodies of four Tangkhul Naga civilians were recovered Friday, a day after they were killed at a remote village along the India-Myanmar border in Manipur's Kamjong district.

The four were allegedly shot by members of Myanmar-based Kuki National Army-Burma. A source said the bodies were found at an isolated spot in Pulong village after a search by police and locals. A case was registered at Chassad police station.

Manipur CM M Y Khemchand Singh condemned the killings, saying "such acts of violence have no place in our society and will not be tolerated".

Local MLA L Keishing of NPF urged the central and state govts to strengthen border security. NPF state chief Awangbou Newmai appealed to all to "shun violence" and "co-exist as peaceful neighbours".

During the day, Army personnel found and destroyed three IEDs in Ukhrul. TNN

3 BJP allies say EC must clear air, can't lose people's trust

'Must Respond To Questions On Its Conduct'

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Three NDA partners — Chirag Paswan's LJP (RV), Upendra Kushwaha's RLM, and Chandrababu Naidu's TDP — Friday urged the Election Commission (EC) to explain its position on the political controversy surrounding the electoral process and implementation of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, saying this was necessary to dispel doubts among the public.

Paswan, LJP(RV) chief and Union food processing industries minister, told reporters in Patna he did not intend, as part of govt, to "defend what is a constitutional body", but wanted EC to address concerns among people. "If questions are being raised about its conduct, it is the responsibility of EC, especially the chief election commissio-

'VIP voter instruction a routine process'

Instructions to BLOs on "flagging of marked electors" such as MPs, judges, artists, sportspersons, and those in public offices, are part of SIR orders unanimously approved by EC, poll panel sources told TOI. Besides, the instruction is routine and has figured in all special summary revisions over the years, they said, adding that the term 'VIP elector-related changes' is only part of the app description. **P 18**

ner (Gyanesh Kumar), to present its side firmly," Paswan said. He added that he had nothing to do with what the opposition said, as their job was to level allegations and politicise the issue, but the common people needed to be taken into confidence.

"If people start losing trust in the electoral system, that will not augur well for democracy and, therefore, I think the EC must come out with its clarification more forcefully. It need not respond

SC plea against CEC's 'unilateral' moves

An SC lawyer filed a plea in SC seeking criminal prosecution of CEC Gyanesh Kumar for "unilateral, unauthorised, and illegal decisions" executed in the name of EC, while another approached the attorney general seeking permission to file a contempt petition against Kumar. Among other issues, the former sought immediate restoration of statutory Form 6, doing away with questions on parents' names on rolls. **P 18**

to what Rahul Gandhi and his associates are saying. But it must dispel misgivings in the minds of the people," he said.

RLM president Kushwaha echoed Paswan, writing in a social media post, "There is considerable confusion among the public regarding the controversy surrounding SIR. This issue needs to be addressed. The EC should immediately clarify the situation to dispel this confusion."

► Transparency, P 18

No vote? Can't apply for Tirth, Lakshmi Yojana

Delhi residents whose names have been struck off electoral rolls may not be able to benefit from two flagship welfare schemes of Delhi govt — Delhi Lakshmi Yojana and Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana. Both list a valid voter ID as a requirement to apply, reports Alok K N Mishra.

► Deadline in 5 days, huge pendency in Gurgaon, P 6

Most other govt schemes do not require a Delhi voter ID for registration or eligibility. EC data shows 47.6 lakh voters have been deleted from the draft electoral roll as of Aug 31.

Applicants for Delhi Lakshmi Yojana, the Rs 2,500-a-month scheme launched in Aug this year for women aged 21-60, require a Delhi voter ID besides an endorsement letter from the MP or MLA concerned. The pilgrimage scheme, rolled out by AAP govt in 2018, covers senior citizens. **P 6**

AFSPA extended in 3 NE states; Kuki group chief held in Aizawl

New Delhi/Aizawl. The home ministry Friday extended the application of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 in parts of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland for six months, until March 31, 2027. Status quo has been retained in terms of police stations and districts declared "disturbed".

Meanwhile, the commander-in-chief of the banned United Kuki National Army was arrested Thursday in Aizawl and will be sent to Manipur, a senior police officer said. Thangkhomang Haokip was held in a joint operation by Assam Rifles and Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau. "He is not in the custody of Mizoram police. The case is most likely to be taken over by NIA," the officer said.

A central agency official said NIA sleuths had also arrested two Kuki student leaders from Manipur at a hotel in Aizawl.

Haokip is accused of involvement in several attacks, including a 2024 ambush on an advance security convoy of then Manipur CM N Biren Singh. TNN

(With inputs from HC Vanlalruata)

Iran sends terms to US to reopen Hormuz and restart N-talks in 7 days

Iran has offered to reopen Strait of Hormuz and resume nuclear talks within seven days if US lifts its naval blockade of Iranian ports, waives sanctions on oil sales and observes a ceasefire including Lebanon, foreign minister Abbas Araghchi told a private gathering on the sidelines of UNGA in New York Thursday.

Trita Parsi, executive vice-president of Quincy Institute, said the proposal had been conveyed to US through mediators and resembled June's failed memorandum, but with an accelerated timetable instead of a 60-day interim period. The deal would also ease severe economic pressure as Washington adds sanctions. Parsi said Araghchi argued a quick agreement could help President Trump before Nov's midterm elections and reduce fuel prices.

Trump has said he is in no rush despite oil-driven inflation. Parsi said deep suspicion remained that Iran might buy time to export more oil, while Tehran suspected Washington was using diplomacy to deter Iranian pre-emptive strikes before midterms.

President Masoud Pezeshkian, who told UN Wednesday that Iran remained open to diplomacy, hosted Qatar's prime minister early Friday. Qatar mediated hours of indirect Iran-US talks this week. There was no immediate Iranian comment, and duration of Pezeshkian and Araghchi's US stay was unclear.

Bloomberg



Iran foreign minister Abbas Araghchi at UNGA in New York

Allies back Saudi as more Iranian flights restricted

Saudi, Turkish and Pakistani military chiefs are to discuss help for Saudi Arabia as it faces attacks by Yemen's Houthis, while Iraq further curtailed Iranian flights on Friday, in line with US pressure, and an Iranian official threatened retaliation. Mohammad Mokhber, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader, accused regional countries of "alignment with America" for blocking flights. "If Iran doesn't have the possibility to fly and get airport services, then no country in the region will have this possibility either," he said on social media. AGENCIES

The proposal covers Lebanon, where Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah have mostly observed a ceasefire, but it is unclear whether it includes renewed fighting between Yemen's Houthis and Saudi Arabia. Tehran believes Houthis' enhanced threat to Bab el-Mandeb Strait could pressure Trump. AP

Trump pivots from 'Kung Flu' to hug Xi's panda diplomacy

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Washington DC to negotiate trade, technology tariffs and the future of the global economy. Instead, he got the most elaborate housewarming party ever thrown by a man desperate to impress his guest.

A gobsmacked America is cracking up at US President Donald Trump's over-the-top reception for Xi, with folks wondering "where Kung flu" — a reference to the MAGA supremo's needling nickname for Covid, for which he has long blamed China.

One commentator compa-

red Trump's welcome of Xi to a nine-year-old showing off his bedroom — with legos, video games and bunk beds — to a friend, before transferring the analogy to the White House, where the US president showed off his gilded Oval Office and his presidential hall of fame.

Another joked that Trump sounded like "a Long Island mom trying to set her adult daughter up on a date". A third transformed Trump's airport welcome of Xi into an imaginary presidential ride-sharing service called "Uber Trump." The joke: Why summon an ordinary driver when the president himself can pick you up?

Not known for fawhing over

anyone, astonished American commentators wondered if Trump had offered Xi a pair of slippers for a sleepover at the White House, thrown rose petals at the foot of his bed, and asked him whether he wanted the guest Wi-Fi password.

As it turned out, Xi kept his distance, staying at the Waldorf Astoria, a few blocks from the White House, and not even at Blair House, which is opposite the White House and typically hosts state guests. Aside: Xi stayed at Blair House during his 2015 visit; and the property that is now Waldorf Astoria was formerly a Trump hotel.

The comedy began even be-

fore Xi had reached the ceremonial reception, with the image of Trump wincing at the noise from US bombers launching a thousand quips. "Trump picked him up at the airport? That is friendship. I don't even pick my own kid up at the airport!" gagged Desi Lydic on the Daily Show, joking that Trump recoiling at the roar of a US bomber flying overhead was like a child startled by the noise of its own fart. "For a man who's always screaming about China, Hairman Mao laid it on very thick today," joked Jimmy Kimmel.

There was also food. Jimmy Fallon contrasted the elegant Chinese-influenced dishes at the dinner banquet with

to find a new way of coexisting.

Chinese would have built in 12 days if not 12 hours.

Trump's preferred "two Big Mac with large fries and a Diet Coke", while Kimmel warned that China sending pandas to US was a bad idea because Trump may just eat them. "I'm not saying Trump is sucking up to him, but the Kennedy Center is now called the Xi Kennedy Center," Fallon quipped.

Across both late-night stages and social media, the jokes clustered around the same themes: the extravagant, almost childlike eagerness of the reception (airport pickup, red carpets, renovation tours, helipad pride); the contrast with Trump's earlier hard-line China bluster; the superficiality of the pageantry ver-

sus unresolved issues; food contrasts (elegant Chinese-American fusion versus Trump's fast-food preferences); and the panda gift as both charming and comically mismatched. The humour treated the summit less as high diplomacy and more as a high-production personal friendship performance, with Trump's fawning providing the punchlines, including an observation from Seth Meyers that "not even Chinese citizens gush this much about Xi". The short trade-truce extension and absence of any major breakthroughs only sharpened the focus on the optics, offering plenty of fire for satire.

India may sign new investment pact with Australia & Canada

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The new model bilateral investment treaty (BIT), which will address concerns of several countries and streamline investment negotiation procedures, while ensuring investor protection is in final stage and is likely to be approved by govt soon. The approval will pave the way for it to be rolled out along with trade agreements, with countries such as Australia and Canada, while also being used with partners such as the UK and the European Union.

One of the key elements is reduction in the period to seek international arbitration to one year from five years at present, provided domestic remedies are exhausted.

"The finance ministry has sent the draft note for approval and it will be approved soon. There are a few red lines, which are not being given up. The new BIT will continue to protect India's sovereign rights on taxation and domestic courts. No tax related provisions will be part of it as it is a Parliamentary prerogative," a senior official said. The Union cabinet is expected to approve the revised model BIT over next couple of weeks, replacing the contentious version of 2015, which was rejected by most countries.

According to Unctad database, since 2018 only six countries have agreed to BITs with India, including Belarus, Kyr-

Ties with US in 'uneasy equilibrium': CEA

India's relationship with the US is in an "uneasy equilibrium" as trade disputes between the partners persist, a senior govt official said. "There is this issue of unsettled relationship with the US, starting from the tariff-related issues last year, which are still continuing," chief economic adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said in a speech at SBI's banking and economics conclave in Mumbai on Thursday.



New Delhi faces a fresh tariff threat even after reaching an interim trade deal with Washington earlier this year. A new US law gives President Donald Trump the power to impose levies of as much as 100% on countries that buy Russian oil and gas, adding uncertainty as India and the US negotiate a final tariff rate. Nageswaran said the trade and energy pressures facing India may also reflect a broader push to choose between rival global blocs. "India, given its geography and its size, cannot obviously belong to any bloc," Nageswaran said, adding that maintaining its independence could come at cost of higher energy prices and periodic supply disruptions. **BLOOMBERG**

gyzstan, Brazil, UAE, Uzbekistan and Israel. India has already made concessions in case of UAE and Israel, while refusing to make any exception for the UK, EU or the four-nation European Free Trade Association and others with which trade agreements have been signed.

"Under the previous framework, negotiations took place with 20-25 countries. Recent negotiations with countries such as UAE, Qatar and Oman have already diverged from that framework. India is currently negotiating BITs with four countries, including Canada and UK. And, these will be done under the new framework," the official said.

On Friday, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said full FTA with Australia, which is under negotiation, will come with an investment pact. "Now we have decided to work towards a very balanced, fair and equitable, comprehensive economic cooperation agreement, which will also take our relationship to greater heights. We are working with Australia to have a bilateral investment treaty also." A BIT is an agreement between two countries to promote and protect investments made by their investors in each other's territory. Under investment protection treaties, investors can take a sovereign govt to arbitration.